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AUTHOR Oleka, Sam Onyejindu
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ABSTRACT

"Consciousness of Kind" is a socio-anthropological phenomenon which shows how people belong to groups in which they are conscious of "their kind." How consciousness of kind could affect teachers' pedagogical judgments and decisions, or their behavior toward learners who are not of their "kind," is described in this paper. The word "conscious" has to do with an awareness of one's existence and environment. Therefore, consciousness of kind is the recognition of belonging to a group of people who are alike in some ways, leading individuals to be positively biased toward their group consciousness. One consequence of such biases is teacher ethnocentrism: an attitude where teachers view students as being naive and ignorant, as needing to be intellectually cleaned-up through the impartation of knowledge which only the teacher can give. Implicit in this view is the notion of superiority. But consciousness of kind occurs in other dimensions of interaction, such as human cultural contexts, group identity, social organization, status, potential for destructiveness, discrimination, race relations, perception reality in classroom, meaning, language. Each of these dimensions are explored here. The paper concludes with some of the implications of this mindset and offers recommendations for the classroom. Contains 32 footnotes. (RJM)

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THE IMPLICATIONS OF 'CONSCIOUSNESS OF KIND' IN SCHOOL CLASSROOMS: A REFLECTION

Sam Onyejindu Oleka
The Whitney M. Young Jr., College of Leadership Studies
133 Caver Hall
Kentucky State University
(502) 227 - 6411
e-mail: soleka@gwmail.kysu.edu

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ABSTRACT

The Implications of 'Consciousness of Kind' in School Classrooms: A Reflection

"Consciousness of kind" is a socio-anthropological phenomenon which shows how people belong to groups in which they are conscious of "their kind". Today's students are from various multicultural backgrounds. Teachers must deal with these different "kinds" of students and their multicultural backgrounds in classrooms. Like the students, teachers themselves come from various "consciousness of kind" groups. This has the potential for pedagogical problems. Although why people like to live, attract and become attracted to others similar to themselves is not clear, it is clear that consciousness of kind is a powerful stimulus to social interaction and group formation. For this reason, it has significant implications for classroom teachers.

The purpose of this paper was to describe how "consciousness of kind" could affect teachers' pedagogical judgments and decisions or behavior toward learners who are not of their "kind" when such learners need individual attention, counseling, discipline or reward in the classroom. The study recommended ways teachers could deal with negative issues associated with consciousness of kind, provide students with sense of individual identity and how they fit into the world.

Consciousness of kind and Teacher Ethnocentrism

"Consciousness of kind"

The word "conscious" has to do with an awareness of one's existence and environment. Consciousness of kind is, therefore, people's recognition of their belonging to a group of people who are like them in some ways. They either share same surroundings or environment, educational status, social status, or some distinct or distinguishing characteristics. No matter what they do, they are positively biased toward their group consciousness.

"Teacher Ethnocentrism"

Teacher ethnocentrism is the general attitude some teachers have about students as "know-nothing-ers" full of naivete and rawness that need to be intellectually cleaned-up and behaviorally modified through the impartation of knowledge or information which only teachers themselves can give in their classrooms. Teacher ethnocentrism has the idea of teachers' superiority to their students. It is common knowledge that teachers generally assume they are masters of some specific knowledge in some specific fields which sets them apart from everybody else, especially their students. Their possession of these specific knowledge in some specific fields is what attracts people, especially students, to them. For this reason teachers perceptually view themselves as superior to students. This perception apparently is what predisposes teachers to practice consciousness of kind or group consciousness.

Like ethnocentrism, consciousness of kind or group consciousness is regarded as a powerful stimulus to social interaction and group formation. According to Hiebert (1988),

> **People who are conscious of their common identity usually share certain visible signs, by which they recognize one another. These may be biological characteristics, such as sex, skin color, or body shape, or they may be cultural traits, like general styles of clothing, distinct accents, and specific customs. Christians revere the Bible, Muslims the Koran, and Hindus the Vedas. American blacks have their soul food and Americans, in general, their hamburgers and milk shakes. Such markers come to symbolize the identity of the group and reinforce the members' consciousness of the uniqueness of their kind (p.179).[1]**

Ethnocentrism itself stems from an over-extended group consciousness. It is a sociological phenomenon which is classically defined by Sumner (1906)[2] as the view that one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with

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[1]Hiebert, P.G. (1988). Cultural Anthropology. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.

[2] Sumner, W.G. Folkways. New York, New York: Ginn, 1906.

reference to it. Sumner believed that ethnocentrism was the attitude that made each group nourish its own pride and vanity, boast of itself as superior to others, exalt its own divinities, and look with contempt on others. It "occurs wherever cultural differences are found" (Giddings, 1988).[3] Ethnocentrism typifies the tendency people have to judge other people and their cultures by the values and assumptions of their own culture's criteria and superiority.

This paper identified various areas in which consciousness of kind occurs in the following paragraphs. These areas include human cultural contexts, group identity, social organization, status, potential for destructiveness, discrimination, race relations, perception reality in classrooms, meaning and language. The last section of the paper deals with classroom implications and recommendations.

Consciousness of Kind and Human Cultural Contexts:

Cultural anthropologists study humans and their behaviors within cultural contexts. Two of the many areas they study about humans are social groups and social institutions (Hiebert, 1988).[4] People are social beings, and as social beings, they form groups and create societies in which they live and enter into deep and meaningful relationships with one another. Most human groups, especially ethnic groups, do not exist in total isolation. "They have trade, social, and ritual networks that link them to their neighbors" (Hiebert, 1988, p.177)[5]

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[3] Giddings, (1988). In Hiebert, P.G. Cultural Anthropology. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.

[4] Hiebert, P.G. (1988). Cultural Anthropology. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.

[5] Hiebert, P.G. (1988). Cultural Anthropology. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.

Human groups are difficult to describe because they are made up of many *kinds of people*. The difficulty becomes complex when one examines the different ways of defining *kind* in relation to people's membership in a number of groups. According to Hiebert (1988),

> **One might speak, for example, of Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Buddhists, and Hindus; of plumbers, physicians, policemen, physicists; of tribals, peasants and city folk; of the literate and the illiterate; of the rich and the poor. Moreover, there are Chinese, Nigerians, Samoans, and Englishmen. People come in a variety of sizes, shapes, and colors, and to these differences they have added a great many more social distinctions (p.178).**[6]

Each of the above groups are undeniably conscious of their kind. For example, Christians are conscious of Christians. Within the Christian group are the Conservative Evangelicals who are conscious of their fellow Conservative Evangelicals; the Charismatic Pentecostals who are conscious of their fellow Charismatic Pentecostals; the Methodists and the Presbyterians who are both conscious of their own kind. Muslims are conscious of Muslims. Jews are conscious of their fellow Jews. Buddhists are conscious of Buddhists. Short people are conscious of their fellow short people. Tall people are equally conscious of their fellow tall people. Black people are conscious of Black people, while White people are conscious of fellow White people. The list goes on and on.

Consciousness of Kind and Group Identity:

Consciousness of kind and group identity is as old as the story of the "Tower of Babel" which Moses wrote in Genesis chapter 11.[7] **The people are said to have one**

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[6] Hiebert, P.G. (1988). Cultural anthropology. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.

[7] Genesis chapter 11:1-9. Now the whole earth had one language and few words. And as men migrated east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had bricks for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which

language and few words. Their language was their strength for unity and social cohesion. They understood each other and apparently had no perceptual differences between them. That might have been why they were able to plan to build a tower with its top in the heavens, and to create a name for themselves. However, when the Lord came down and confused their language so that they experienced difficulty understanding one another, they became conscious of their various *linguistic kinds*. Those who presumably understood each other formed their own linguistic groups. Once they formed these linguistic groups, they began to experience group consciousness or consciousness of kind.

Consciousness of kind centers on the concept of individual or group identity. The word identity, here, refers to "what one is", "what a group represents", or the "essence of an individual" or the group to which the individual is affiliated. Individuals or groups tend to be conscious of who they are. They tend to be conscious of who they are in relation to other individuals or groups around them. Generally speaking, this is because people do not understand who they are in a vacuum. People tend to understand their individual identity with reference to other people either inside or outside of their own contexts.

Understanding of something is always predicated to something else that explains or expresses, in a better way, what is being understood. For example, a person who is dark in complexion does not necessarily know she is dark in complexion until she meets someone who is fair in complexion and verse versa. The issue here is understanding "Dark" and "fair" complexions. In this context, an understanding of the difference between "dark" and

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the sons of men had built. And the Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

"fair" complexions becomes obvious. One may not be known or identified without the other.

The above individuals see each other as different. They see each other as different because they now know that they do not have the same color. Once they recognize the factor that makes them different, they automatically begin to be conscious of that factor. In this case, the factor is color. The recognition of this major difference between these individuals with different complexions causes them to gravitate towards those with their kind of complexion. This is how consciousness of kind begins. Humans pass on to their offsprings this phenomenon of "conscious recognition of skin color differences" through the socialization process.

Social Organization:

Consciousness of kind is not only the result of individual or group identity, but also the result of social organization. Hiebert (1988) describes social organization as "the patterns of interpersonal behavior characteristics of a society" (p.140).[8] He argues that there are three levels at which social organization can be studied. First is the simplex level at which all relationships can be seen as interactions between pairs of individuals. Second is the less complex level at which the observer looks at the interaction of groups of people. Third is the much complex or higher level at which social organization can be analyzed in terms of the total society. The key words in understanding the patterns of interpersonal behavior characteristics involved in each level of relationships are "status " and "roles". This is because social organization centers on these key concepts that throw significant light on human relationships.

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[8] Hiebert, P.G. (1988). Cultural Anthropology. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.

Consciousness of Kind and Social Status:

The term "status" means various things to various people. However, in our everyday usage, it refers to the general position a person occupies in a society. Status has also been defined as a position in a social system occupied by designated individuals (Linton, 11893-1953 in Hiebert, 1988).[9] Some people are said to be "high", "marginal" and "low" in their social status. Status in this sense could be visualized as a ladder on which those who are the socio-economic leaders and decision makers of the society are at the top. These are the people with the voice in the society. They are usually few in number and always well-educated and sophisticated. They relate and interact with members of their class and seldom enters into any form of relationships with members of the lower social class. They are usually conscious of their kind in all they do. Their children are socialized into this level of socio-economic status.

At the very bottom of the ladder are usually those who have been marginalized by those in power, "the aristocrats". The status of those at the bottom of the ladder is not enviable. They are powerless and mostly voiceless and under-represented in the society's decision-making arena.

Consciousness of Kind and It's Potential to be Destructive:

Example of the Germans and the Jews:

When consciousness of kind is not under control, it has the potential to be destructive. Take a look at what the ancient Egyptians did to the Hebrews before the Exodus. The ruling Pharaoh at that time placed them under forced labor and ordered their first born sons to be killed. In Hitler's Germany, about six million Jews were killed because

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[9] Hiebert, P.G. (1988). Cultural Anthropology. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.

they were not Germans. Although many of them were born in Germany, the Jews were not protected by the German consciousness of kind but rather were destroyed by German ethnocentrism. In Hungary, the same was the case. According to Elie Wiesel (1995),

> **It would be hard to exaggerate the maliciousness of the Hungarian gendarmes. Ordered to implement the Eichmann plan for our extermination, they did so with a zeal and brutality that will forever remain the dishonor of the Hungarian army and nation. The announcement that a ghetto was to be created came almost as a relief. At least we would be among Jews, with our families (p.5)[10]**

In Wiesel's thinking, being among Jews and with Jewish families meant being among their "own kind". He felt that they would be safe among their own people (fellow Jews). Jews, who are conscious of their fellow Jews, would not do anything to hurt them, especially in a time of extreme pain, anguish, and imminent death.

Example of the Serbs, Croats and Muslims in Bosnia Herzogovina:

Take a look at the previous war in Bosnia Herzogovina between the Serbs, the Croats and the Muslims, who occupy most of Sarajevo. The Serbs went to war to fight for the establishment of a Greater Serbia that would be free of Croats and Muslims. This has been the Serbian reason for ethnically cleansing the non-Serbians out of the territory.[11] Rather than face a horrifying possibility of total destruction of their wives and children, moms and dad, brothers and sisters, and indeed, their entire culture, and everything else dear to them, the Muslims went to war to defend Muslims, and the Croats to defend

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[10] Wiesel, E. (1995). "The Decision: Elie Wiesel recalls the terrible moment when his family had to make a crucial choice" Parade Magazine. August 27. Pp.4-6. This was one of the most difficult times the Jews had to face. "No Jew was allowed to go out, except in the late afternoon to buy food" (p.5).

[11] Chen, Roger (1995). "Balkan States to talk peace". Lexington Herald-Leader. Saturday, September 2, p.B1).

Croats. Each of these three groups fought for the interests of their own kind and the territory they occupied. For this reason, it may be said that consciousness of kind is a contributing factor to the conflict in the old Yugoslavia.

Examples from Other Parts of the World:

Consciousness of kind is undoubtedly one of the main reasons for most of the conflicts around the world today. It definitely plays a key role in the atrocities committed in Rwanda by the Hutus against the Tutsis. It played a key role in the conflicts between the warring factions in Somalia. It was one of the chief contributing factors in the civil war between the Eritreans and the Ethiopians. It was a factor in Mozambique and Angola. It was certainly a factor in the defunct South Africa's apartheid regime. It is constantly at work in the age-long conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Consciousness of kind is at the heart of the racial problem in the United States of America.

Consciousness of Kind and Discrimination:

As human beings, we live and function in groups. To a large extent, groups provide everyone of us with a sense of individual identity, an awareness of who we are, and how we fit into this world with everyone else. Each group develops certain symbols, signs, and characteristics that sets it apart from other groups. Each group has its own special ways of doing things. Each has its own traditions, names and a geographical location it occupies.

Members within every group tend to look at each other as individuals with noticeable differences. However, when they look at other groups, it is usually with stereotypical, derogatory and unlikeable look. Why do groups do this to each other? The answer to this question is not as simple. However, two factors are apparently responsible

for it's occurrence. The first factor is consciousness of kind. Groups tend to look at each of their members with noticeable differences and find nothing wrong with them. They find nothing wrong with them because they are members of the same group. Knowing that they are members of the same group, they proceed to display consciousness of kind tendencies toward themselves. They demonstrate pride in their group, and this pride gives rise to their group consciousness or consciousness of kind.

Therefore, the second factor, in answer to the above question, is pride. Hiebert has said that pride is based, in part, on differences, and that without these differences, life might be monotonous[12]. Pride exists on the premise that one's group is better than someone else's group. In choosing between groups, one tends to discriminate against an "outgroup" by choosing an "in-group" - - his own group. Pride leads to discrimination. Discrimination does not mean an exclusion from the benefits reserved for only group members, but is a decision to deny some privileges or pleasures reserved for in-group members to those who do not choose or qualify to become members. Hiebert (1988)[13] argues that often, the privilege denied is membership in the group itself, not on the basis of some qualification that is essential to the nature of the group, but simply to keep certain people out, on the basis of personal likes and dislikes.

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[12] Hiebert, P.G. (1988). Cultural Anthropology. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House. Hiebert believes that since pride gives rise to group consciousness, it has the potential to lead to discrimination and conflict. According to him,

> Ours is a world of blacks and whites, American and Russians, Arabs and Israelis, farmers and city folk, and aristocrats and commoners. Moreover, conflict is greatest between groups geographically close to each other, who compete for the same resources and status (p.184).

[13] Hiebert, P.G. (1988). Cultural Anthropology. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.

Discrimination is wrong. Argument supporting discrimination lacks strength. Every human being in his or her right mind knows that discrimination of any type has no useful purpose to either those who discriminate or are discriminated against. We all agree on this truth and cannot deny it's existence. We must be aware of it in order to prevent it from destroying the oneness on which strong societies are built. That is why the following statement is so appropriate.

> **If we agree that discrimination is wrong, the solution is not to deny that differences exist between people or that groups based on these differences should be formed. There are obvious differences among groups of people, in roles, wealth, religions, skin, colors, and cultures, and without some types of groups, no society can exist (Hiebert, 1988, p.184).[14]**

Consciousness of Kind and Race Relations:

Consciousness of kind is one of the sources of inter-ethnic conflicts, inter-racial problems, international disputes, inter-cultural misunderstandings and almost all kinds of conflicts today. It is what drives a constant wage between the African Americans, Latinos, European Americans and other cultural groups in this great country. Recently in taking charge of the NAACP, Kwesi Mfume was quoted by Raspberry (1995) as saying,

> **We are at the cross-roads of tremendous change in our nation. Despite the gains made by African Americans, racism continues to divide our country and polarize our people. We can stand by and watch in the comfort of our own circumstances, or we can step forward and dare to lead (p.A13)[15]**

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[14] Hiebert, P.G. (1988). Cultural Anthropology. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker book House.

[15] Raspberry, W. (Friday, December 15, 1996). "A new direction for NAACP: Will it blame race or emphasize choice?". Lexington, Kentucky, Lexington Herald-Leader. P.A13

Consciousness of kind, bordering on racism, was apparently the reason for the recent action the United States Army took in combating hate (Editorials, 1995).[16] Some of the recent headings in the Lexington Herald-Leader suggest there is fear between the races in the city. Here are some excerpts of the headings: "The ABCs of Race", "Some Whites don't want their kids in mostly black schools", "Distance neighbors: race, schools and housing in Lexington" (1996).[17] "Poor: parents worry about school make-up" (1996).[18]

Racial consciousness has permeated every aspect of the American life and society. It runs deep in the veins of both white and black Americans when inter-racial marriage relationship is mentioned. This is not new for it was the case during the period in which the Africans were brought here and enslaved against their will. At some point during that period, Bennett (1988) observes,

> **As the economic interests of the planters changed, their concern and color consciousness changed. With the introduction of black slavery in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, it became a matter of public policy to use every available means to create an unbridgeable chasm between blacks and whites. The central point of this policy was the colonial white woman, who became the primary**

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[16] According to the Lexington Herald-Leader's editorials (Friday, December 15, 1995),

> "The army is taking appropriate action by investigating the extent to which hate groups are represented among the country's 510,000 volunteer soldiers.
>
> Two white paratroops from the 82nd Airborne Division, including Pvt. Malcolm Wright of Louisville, were charged last week with killing a black couple in Fayetteville, N.C. A third white soldier was charged with driving the car used during the killings, which were apparently racially motivated. The two suspects charged with the slayings were allegedly involved with white supremacist organizations or activities" (p.A12).

[17] Lexington Herald-Leader (Monday 15, 1996). The front page of this issue is replete with titles on race and racism. When some whites don't want to sent send their children in mostly black schools, that is a clear sign of consciousness of kind.

[18] Lexington Herald-Leader (Friday, January 19, 1996). In this issue, it is argued that race has nothing to do with it, educators say, except that the issues get clouded when many poor children in schools are black (p.A8).

> **instrument for organizing the color perceptions of whites and for extending the economic exploitation of blacks. Defending her honor and purity now became a collective imperative (pp.300-301).[19]**

The issue of racial consciousness has not only affected the marital relationships between the sexes in white and black cultural groups, but also the social issue of transracial adoption. In his article, "Black children, white parents: the difficult issue of transracial adoption", Wheeler (1993) quotes a Georgetown University law professor, Anita Allen, who writes,

> **The empirical research Professor Bartholet cited does not invalidate the concerns of black nationalists who argue that the adoption of black children by white parents erodes the economic, political, and cultural bases of black social life.**
>
> **Black nationalism demands more of children of African American descent than they look black, feel subjectively happy, do well in school, and find success in the workplace. Blacks reared by whites will, some fear, learn to think 'white' and to prefer the companionship of whites (p.A9).[20]**

This is a classic example of consciousness of kind. One would think that any married couple, who wants to provide a home, care and nurture for any child, irrespective of their color or the child's color or cultural background, ought to be able to do so unhindered. But the above position caused by consciousness of kind certainly makes it difficult, if not impossible.

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[19] Bennett Jr., L. (1988). Before the Mayflower: A history of Black America. Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc. Prior to this period, the inter-racial relationships between black males and white women and between black women and white men was not questioned in Virginia or any where in the South. For, according to James Hugo Johnston's excellent study, "Race Relations in Virginia and Miscegenation in the South," and the "larger part of such race mixture", was due to the union of black males and white females. According to Bennette (1988), "Johnston's study and contemporary documents, including court records, newspaper stories and the reports of eyewitnesses, provide most conclusive proof that the white women of this period were free of that "natural race prejudice" (p.299).

[20] Wheeler, D.L. (1993). "Black children, white parents: the difficult issue of transracial adoption". The Chronicle of Higher Education. September 15, (p.A 8,9,16).

Patti Davis (1995) wrote a tribute to her father, Ronald Reagan, under the title, "Angels Don't Die". She presented the former president as being concerned about the direction the nation was heading. He was particularly concerned because of the hate racial overtones and hate speeches people gave during the past Republican National Convention. Davis said,

> **The difference between my father and his political peers was never more obvious than at the 1992 Republican National Convention. In the midst of what was the most bigoted, racist convention I'd ever witnessed, there was my father, giving a dignified, unpredujiced speech, intended to unify, not attack.**
>
> **My mother has since told me that he saw the direction that the convention was heading in, and deliberately tried to pull it back from the racism and judgmentalism that was characterizing the entire event. ... He actually believed he could. He was supposed to go on earlier in the evening, in prime time, but the other speeches went on so long, by the time he took the stage, the convention was deep in swampland. I watched the entire event and what I choose to focus on is that my father's speech had a dignity that didn't belong in that room.**
>
> **That fall, I invited my parents to my house for dinner. ...I can't recall exactly how the subject of racial tensions and racially motivated violence came up, but I vividly remember my father discussing his feelings on the subject. He pointed out that America is a "melting pot" and that there really are no pure races left. We're all mixture of various races and ethnic backgrounds. That fact alone, he said, should be enough to make us all strive for harmony. ...My father went on at length about how races had crossed lines and melted into one another, so there was no reason for violence and hatred on racial differences. I said to my brother later, "I think he spoke at the wrong convention".**
>
> **I couldn't help speculating what could have happened if Ronald Reagan had stood in front of the American public while he was President and said the same things that he was saying in my home that night. As appalling as that fantasy is, that's not what happened. I do recognize the beauty in his saying it now. I think some of my father's thoughts have been transformed as a result of having time to reflect and knowing that the years are winding down. He is in the time of life when ideas and philosophies should be re-examined, looked at through softer lens(pp.5,6).**[21]

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[21] Davis, P. (1995). "Angels Don't Die." Lexington Herald-Leader Parade. Sunday, April 23, pp.1-6.

Consciousness of Kind and Perception Reality in Classrooms

Teachers play many active roles in schools, especially in their classrooms. According to Armstrong, Henson and Savage (1993), some of these roles include "instructional responsibilities, counseling responsibilities, administrative responsibilities, curriculum development responsibilities, professional development responsibilities, public relations responsibilities and nonschool-related responsibilities" (p.145).[22]

One must realize that teachers who approach any of these roles with poor perceptions and consciousness of kind mind set may have difficulty performing them efficiently to the satisfaction of their superiors or of themselves. The primary responsilibity of teachers is to teach. They teach the curriculum that is usually predetermined by the society on behalf of schools. Sometimes, the teachers may participate in the modification of the curriculum but they are not usually charged with the responsibility to independently decide what should be taught, why it should be taught, to whom it should be taught, and the conditions under which it must be taught.

One of the responsibilities of teachers is to establish an environment in which learning can take place. In classrooms with students from various socio-economic backgrounds, diverse cultural and ethnolinguistic backgrounds, teachers must, especially, deal with the problems of perception reality and consciousness of kind. One of the simplest and yet most difficult problems teachers may have to internalize is the concept of perception reality. Pusch (1981) defines perception as "the idea that everyone perceives the world differently and that members of one culture group share basic sets of perceptions

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[22] Armstrong, D.G., Henson, K.T., & Savage, T.V. (1993). Education: an introduction (4th.ed.). New York: Macmillian Publishing Company.

which differ from the sets of perceptions shared by members of other culture groups"[23]

She further states:

> **It is not that the idea is difficult to understand, it is that it is hard to impose upon ourselves, to internalize so that it affects our behavior. The way we percieve the world, what we expect of it and what we think about it is so basic and so ingrained, is buried so deep in our consciousness that we continuously act and react without thinking why -- without even realizing that we might think why (Pusch, 1981, p.14; in Singer, 1976).[24]**

As humans, we live in various cultural contexts in which we are behaviorally culturally conditioned with vast quantities of sensory data. We are culturally conditioned by what we see, what we hear, what we smell, what we eat, what we touch and are touched with. Our various cultures tell us what to see, hear, smell, eat and touch. Every human being is culturally taught several things from the moment of birth.

Culture effectively teaches every one of us the categories by which we sort, define, understand and store our experiences. We learn the customs, values, norms, and sanctions which we take with us wherever we go. We learn what is accepted as "good" or as "bad" within the system. What we perceive is always screened and selected through this method. Therefore, as teachers, we are culturally conditioned. The students that come to us are also culturally conditioned. Just as we (teachers) learn categories and are able to sort, define, understand and store our experiences, so do the students. This can be a sources of student-teacher misunderstanding and conflicts.

Consciousness of kind is imposed on all people by their respective cultures. It not

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[23] Pusch, M.D. (1981). Multicultural education: Across cultural training approach. Chicago, Illinois: Intercultural Press, Inc.

[24] Singer, M.R. (1976). "Culture: a perceptual approach." Intercultural Communication: A Perceptual Approach. Larry A Samovar and Richard E. Porter (eds.). Belmont, California: Wadswoth Publishing Company, Inc., (Second Edition).

only conditions people to do certain things, but also helps them to decide with whom to associate and interact, with whom to do things together, and with whom to enter into deep and meaningful relationships. Since it is a powerful stimulus to social interaction and group formation, people who are culturally conditioned and have consciousness of kind tendencies tend to display those tendencies toward those who share common identity with them. They usually know who the people are because they share easily-identifiable and distinguishable biological or cultural characteristics.

Since culture, environment and native background predispose people to exhibit consciousness of kind tendencies, teachers and students should be aware of the potential negative effects they could pose in classrooms with culturally diverse learner populations. Students and teachers enter into their various classrooms with their culturally conditioned ways of perceiving, categorizing, classifying, and analyzing things. For this reason, the potential for misunderstandings, miscommunications, misinterpretations, misjudgments and stereotyping tendencies are great. In the classrooms, these can have negative effects on both teaching and learning activities. Such negative effects of a teacher's uncontrolled consciousness of kind tendencies may be with these students the rest of their lives, and could alter the course of their future indefinitely.

Since we use our own cultural experiences to judge, interpret, understand and make meaning of other people's set of classifications and categories, we often run into trouble when our experiences do not fit into their categories and set of classifications. According to Pusch (1981)[25]

> **...when our experience doesn't fit into our categories, it produces ambiguity. Our response may be to force it into an inaccurate category, thereby distorting our**

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[25] Pusch, M.D. (Ed.). (1981). Multicultural education: A cross cultural training approach. Chicago, Illinois: Intercultural Press, Inc.

> **perception of reality; or we may feel insecure and uncertain. Those feelings affect our relationships to the world around us. When we encounter values, behaviors, communication styles, ways of thinking which don't fit our categories of meaning but fit, instead, the categories of some other culture group, communication is likely to break down. An American mainstream male who is touched and hugged by a male from another cultural background will probably classify that behavior negatively, respond with discomfort if not anger, and have difficulty relating to the person who hugged him (p.15).**

Teachers and students must be aware of and deal with the problem of the stereotypical nature of consciousness of kind in the classrooms with culturally diverse learner populations. Consciousness of kind creates the spirit of ethnocentrism in people. Our cultures teach us to categorize and classify in order to belong to our own kind. They teach us to categorize and classify such traits as dress, behavior, skin or hair color, shape of face, salient features, stature and so on. Therefore, when we categorize we stereotype, when we stereotype, we discriminate, and when we discriminate, we become conscious of our kind. And when these things happen, we become ambiguous in our thinking and loose sight of reality in our classrooms as teachers and as students.

When we do not deal with and control our consciousness of kind with its stereotypical tendencies, according to Pusch (1981), this will lead to:

> **A tendency to invest those categories, because they constitute the unknown, with negative or destructive emotions. These are emotions to which, as humans, we are all subject - fear, envy, mistrust, etc., They are emotions all too often reality-based, arising out of competition for limited resources, territory or power, but the important point here is that from a natural and necessary function of the human organism, a major barrier to intercultural communication may emerge (p.15).**[26]

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[26] Pusch, M.D. (Ed.). (1981). Multicultural education: A cross cultural training approach. Chicago, Illinois: Intercultural Press, Inc.

Consciousness of Kind, Meaning and Language:

Meaning is contextual and relative. It does not occur in a vacuum and could change from place to place depending on its environment. Meaning comes from people's use of words and symbols in communicating with each other. People's use of words and symbols in communicating is what constitutes their use of language.

Language is a phenomenological vehicle, not only biologically but environmentally determined, in which people substitute signs, symbols and words for ideas, actions and other phenomena in either written or spoken form and assign them cultural significance. It is the cultural significance which gives the signs, symbols and words their meanings and the contexts in which the meanings are anchored. No sign, symbol or words can mean what it is assigned to mean if the assigned meaning is not shared by the people in the culture that assigns the meaning. As Hiebert (1988)[27] has said,

> **We learn the meanings of words and other symbols from the way they are used in everyday life, though the meaning of any symbol varies slightly from person to person...**
>
> **Despite the individual differences, people do reach a general consensus on the meanings of symbols, in part because they share similar experiences. Most people in our society have seen trees hills, stop signs, cars, and clocks and have learned to associate specific symbols with these experiences by listening to and observing the behaviors of others (p.118).**

Language is central to all cultures and all cultural existence. People are distinguished by such factors as looks - physical appearance, dress patterns - fashions, preferred type of food, shelter, laws of relationships, marriage and customs, and the type of language they speak. According to Oleka (1986),

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[27] Hiebert, P.C. (1988). Cultural Anthropology. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.

> **...language plays the role of a cultural identity distinguisher or an ethnic group identifier. One of the cultural elements that distinguishes one cultural identity group from another cultural identity group, one ethnic group from another ethnic group, is language. For example, the English are referred to as a cultural identity group because they speak English. In this example, English language acts as a very important distinguishing factor. It distinguishes the English from the Russians who speak Russian, from the Germans who speak German, from the French who speak French, from the Japanese who speak Japanese, from the Dutch who speak Dutch, and from the Americans who speak English with an American accent. Language is the identifier of its speaker (p.190)[28]**

Language is ethnocentric in nature because of its distinguishing characteristics. Linguistic ethnocentrism tends to predispose cultural identity groups to display consciousness of kind tendencies toward those who speak the same language with them. They tend to gravitate toward them even if they are not naturally born into that cultural ethnolinguistic group. It is enough just to speak their language. French citizens love foreigners who speak French. Spanish people love foreigners who speak their language. The Hausa people love those who speak Hausa. East Africans who speak Swahili love non-East Africans who speak Swahili. People generally value their language over other people's language and appreciate those who speak and sound like them.

In classrooms with culturally diverse learners populations, language can be a source of conflict between teachers and students. It can be an instrument of oppression in the hands of teachers and a reactionary tool in the hands of students. Take for instance an American teacher who cannot say an international student's name correctly because it is a cultural name and, therefore, too difficult for the teacher to say. The student feels his name is deeply anchored with meaning in his ethnolinguistic culture and must be said by those who really want to know who he is. He, however, discovers that the teacher is not

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[28] Oleka, S.O. (1986). Ethnocentrism Among Nigerian Students in American College and Universities. East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation.

interested in his name, let alone attempting to learn how to say it. Even after the student offers to help the teacher learn how to pronounce it well, he still does not want to try. Let me use my name to illustrate the dialogue between the teacher and the student one day in class.

Teacher: "What is your name?"

Student: "Sam Onyejindu Olekamma."

Teacher: "That's a difficult name to say. I'll just call you Sam."

Student: "Why? I told you that my name is Sam Onyejindu Olekamma and not just Sam".

Teacher: "It is a difficult name to say. You know, it's not like John or Tom. I'll just call you Sam."

Student: "Call me my name! You asked me to tell you my name! Make an attempt to say my name! I love my name! My parents love my name! That is why they gave it to me! Come on, Mr. Bottomdale. I'll help you learn how to say it correctly by repeating it slowly after me."

Teacher: "I'll just call you Sam. It's much easier."

The student was hurt that the teacher would not make an attempt to call him his name. To make matters worse, when his fellow students, who were of European descent, asked for his name and he told them, they called him Sam "Whatever" or Sam "O". They did not attempt to learn to call him by his full name. They acted just like the teacher. They learned from him.

Examine a similar incident in the following quotation:

> **Teacher, why isn't there anyone here like me? Not even the pictures in our books look like me. Teacher, are you like me? Do you eat warm frijoles when you get home? Does your family welcome you into the home with a language so sweet that you would think it was made just for lovers? Teacher, I'm not sure who I am or**

whether or not I belong here. (Majarrez, 1991, p.53[29] ; in Diamond, B.J and Moore, M.A. (1995,p.2)[30]

The sun has set on the British Isle and the great empire has collapsed and ceased to be great, but the language of the empire still rules the world. English is the dominant language of the world. This fact has tended to blind the eyes of certain teachers so that they cannot see the special needs of students for whom English is not their primary language. Since the majority of the teachers in American schools have done everything around those who speak the English language, read books written and published by English authors, watched movies in which all the actors and actresses speak English and live in a society in which other languages and language groups are not recognized and appreciated, they tend not to care or notice those students who are both culturally and linguistically different in American classrooms.

As teachers, we are called upon to look at every student with "equal looks". The students themselves want us to look at them with equal looks. And that when we do, we should try to see the differences between them as students. When we look at them as a group, we should not fail to recognize their individual differences. We should celebrate both their oneness as a class and their diversity as individuals. Even though the dominant culture asks us to educate students with the intention to foster the "melting-pot" concept, we must look at the students with the intention of helping them to learn to function and be productive in this society, but not at the expense of their forgetting their cultural backgrounds. We should not look at some students in ways that may suggest their

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[29] Manjarrez, C.A. (19910. Mama, they don't serve frijoles! In D. Schoem (ED.), Inside Separate worlds: Life stories of blacks, Hispanics, and Jews. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press. P.53.

[30] Diamond, B.J and Moore, M.A. (1995). Multicultural literacy: mirroring the reality of the classroom. White Plains. New York: Longman Publishers USA

superiority over or inferiority to other students. If we do, we will create unnecessary tension and conflict between students. We will help to create spirits of jealously and perhaps dislike and even hate. Our responsibility as teachers is clear. According to Diamond and More:

> **We are challenged to meet the traditional purposes for schooling: an emphasis on academic learning, economic knowledge, and the development of informed minds for citizenship in a pluralistic democracy. In the process of meeting these purposes, we are compelled to look at our students closely and to be aware of their cultural knowledge, which influences how they view the world and, ultimately, how they respond to schooling. We must affirm and acknowledge students' cultural backgrounds, help them to develop positive self-images, and facilitate their ability to construct their own meaning from what they read and write. Educators realize that there will have to be radical changes in what and how children are taught and what they learn if we are to educate all children (p.2)[31]**

The Implications of Consciousness of Kind and Recommendations:

As teachers in classrooms with students from diverse cultural, educational and socio-economic backgrounds, we have to be aware of the following implications about consciousness of kind. First, if we, as teachers, permit ourselves to be blinded by our culture so that we do not see the diversity of the learners in our classrooms, we may teach with a high degree of insensitiveness. When we teach with a high degree of insensitiveness, we not only educate a few students, but most often, we educate no one.

Second, since our consciousness of kind predisposes us to perceive, categorize, classify and interpret things differently, as teachers, we must attempt to see the world from other people's points of view. We must recognize that students have their own points of view which may not necessarily correspond with teacher's points of view.

Third, we know that American culture presents people in the light of what they

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[31] Diamond, B.J. and Moore, M.A. (1995). Multicultural Literacy: Mirroring the reality of the classroom. White Plains, New York: Longman Publishers USA.

make of themselves. For example, Americans earn the respect of others by their own achievements. In that respect, to some extent, they see their work as true representation of what they are. However, in other cultures such as the African or Hispanic cultures, people have dignity because of what they are -- people. They are entitled to the respect of others because they are people, members of the human race. Their jobs are only aspects of their entire being. To avoid communication breakdown which may occur due to the differing values accorded by various cultures to the ideas of humanity, being and work, I suggest that as teachers, we must demonstrate care in this area with regards to students' school achievements. No teacher should demean students on the basis of their academic achievements.

Fourth, for those of us who are charged with the responsibility of training and preparing prospective teachers, the following observation by Diamond and Moore (1995) is an important implication to be seriously examined. According to them,

> In university classes of prospective teachers, we hear troubling stories from students who admit that their parents were prejudiced and that they grew up hearing racial slurs and ethnic jokes. We also hear students who have faced overt and subtle racism and prejudice in school and in their community. Often underlying there negative behaviors and views are the beliefs that people who differ from the majority in language, social class, and color have less right to share in the American dream and should have a diminished voice in shaping our world. The label different carries with it, in the view of some, the label of deficient.
>
> As educators, we cannot let these views go unnoticed or unchallenged. Our students' ways of thinking are shaped largely by what is learned and modeled in school. Teachers can help students learn about and value differing beliefs and ways of viewing the world; teachers can help students appreciate and understand other cultures and break through barriers of fear and ignorance.[32]

Fifth, as teachers, part of our responsibilities is to engage our students in the education for critical consciousness. Education for critical consciousness comes through

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[32] Diamond, B.J. & Moore, M.A. (1995). Multicultural Literacy: Mirroring the reality of the classroom. White Plains, New York: Longman Publishers, USA.

dialogue. Dialogue and adaptation are both healthy exercise if they are carefully guided and directed. One cannot dialogue with someone else without an adequate understanding of his or her context and background. Therefore, we must strive to enter into the contexts of ideas, issues, philosophies, human relations, words and anything that may constitute an object of dialogue. For in so doing, our reflective action and critical theorizing or speculations will lead us to a desired meaning and advance our understanding. Our students must be guided to engage themselves in intellectual dialogue with themselves, texts, teachers and fellow students as a means of achieving critical consciousness.

Sixth, our pedagogy must serve the needs of our young students. It should aim at helping them to find solutions to various problems in the world in which they live. Our pedagogy must help them to reflect on the contemporary issues of our time. One cannot reflect on issues of which they have no knowledge. To know the contemporary issues of our time, our pedagogical method must recommend reflecting on the implications of science, technology, religion, ethics, philosophy for man and the world. Above all, we must teach students to reflect on the implications and negative consequences of consciousness of kind.

Conclusion: If, as teachers, we are not aware of the potential negative consequences that consciousness of kind could pose in our classrooms, we may be more predisposed to teach with a high degree of insensitiveness or become indifferent to the diverse needs students bring to classrooms from their various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. As teachers we must be aware of our own consciousness of kind tendencies and bring them under control to avoid their interferring with our instructional responsibilities in the classroom. Part of our role as teachers is to help students to understand the problems consciousness of kind can create in interpersonal relationships, inter-ethnic or inter-group relationships and provide them with the social skills to bring it under control.